TOWN & COUNTRY CHURCH

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These Papers

BECAUSE of wartime printing conditions, it has been found necessary to issue TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH as a bulletin without regular monthly frequency. We expect, however, to be able to make available a series of informal papers, and to print nine of these issues in the course of twelve months, as we had planned and promised. The Committee on Town and Country of the Home Missions Council, the Federal Council of Churches and the International Council of Religious Education asks you to be patient if copies do not arrive regularly.

Brief stories of what people are doing in local congregations and communities will be the chief features. The aim is to help put the worker in the small community into touch with numerous activities.

Part of Larger Program

The paper will be an important part of an enlarged "cooperative rural church program," that will encourage a national "rural church movement." The paper will be closely linked with a regularly held National Convocation on the Church in Town and Country.

This Issue
No. 24
Published February, 1946

How to Prepare for the Rural Ministry

EDWIN L. BECKER

• The student for the rural ministry should prepare himself academically as well as possible. He should certainly complete the A.B. degree, and increasingly the Bachelor of Divinity degree is becoming the standard of training. There are more college graduates in some of our country churches than in many city churches. The rural church situation today demands the best trained and ablest men we can secure.

If Just Entering College or Still an Undergraduate Student

If you are just entering college or are still an undergraduate student it would be wise to take all the courses offered in the fields of rural sociology, rural economics, the family, and the community. It would be well in choosing a college to look for one in which such courses are available. It should be noted that through the Conferences of Colleges of Agriculture and Theological Schools there has been worked out a pre-theological major to be offered in state colleges of agriculture. Twenty-three state colleges now offer this course. All the graduate Bible Colleges of the Disciples of Christ and most of the other seminaries which Disciple students attend will accept graduates from state agricultural colleges who have taken the pre-theological major.

There is some question as to the advisability of attending an agricultural college in undergraduate preparation for the ministry. It should not be the aim of the rural pastor to become an expert in agriculture. He is not to be a county agent equipped to give advice on soil usages, fertilizers, insect control and the many technical problems of agriculture. He should know an eroded field when he sees one and he should be equipped to encourage better farming practices through a knowledge of the resources available from the county agent, state college and farm organizations. Some students for the rural ministry have attended a state agricultural college for two years before entering one of the church colleges. Others find it possible to take courses in an agricultural college during their graduate seminary work.

If Entering a Bible College or Graduate Seminary

If you are entering a Bible College or graduate seminary it would be wise to select one that makes possible some special training for rural ministers. This is done in various ways by different schools. Some have a professor of town and country church, usually in the department of practical theology. Some provide that a student may attend classes in a state agricultural college and use the credit toward his seminary degree. Some seminaries have an extensive program of field service, sometimes called student internship, with a supervisor who teaches courses on the rural church and supervises the work of student pastors serving rural churches. Other schools, with no chair set aside for rural church courses, make a rural church emphasis in their regular courses in religious education, church administration, youth work and so on. It would be well to write to several Bible Colleges or seminaries in which you are interested to inquire which of the above provisions are made for students dedicated to service in the rural church. The national director of town and country church or your state secretary will be glad to advise with you.

A few years ago C. J. Galpin, one of the fathers of the science of rural sociology and an active Christian layman, wrote:

"If I were to become a rural minister, I would hope that I could attend a rural theological seminary—that is, a seminary, established especially, if not exclusively, for persons intending to enter the rural ministry. I would be assured, in that case, of having teachers sympathetic with farm and village life, sensitive to the 'hidden man of the heart' beating beneath the rural garb. I would also expect to find a group of young men

Singing the Lord's Acre Hymn at the planting of a young people's bean project.

there who had picked out the rural ministry as a life work, and for special reasons were ready to dedicate themselves to this rural work.

"I would hope also that this theological seminary would be situated in close contact with one of our agricultral college, so that I could mingle with the young rural students and attend some of the agricultural college courses. I am confident that this contact with the intellectual side of rural life would, through its esprit de corps, help arm me for my life work."

Such an ideal school for the training of rural ministers does not exist but the student preparing for service in rural areas will do well to choose a college or seminary whose setting and program encourage an understanding and appreciation of rural life.

If Already in the Town and Country Ministry

If you are already in the town and country ministry and are interested in further training there are many opportunities for in-service training now offered to rural ministers. Last year over 3,000 rural ministers attended cooperative summer schools, institutes and camps held at theological seminaries and agricultural colleges. Dr. Mark A. Dawber, executive secretary of the Home Missions Council of North America, has estimated that in one year state colleges of agriculture spend $30,000.00 in the training of rural ministers. Some of these schools are four or five weeks in length and offer academic credit. Others are one and two week institutes with courses in rural sociology, rural community agencies, the program of the rural church, recreation and drama, and other subjects related to the tasks of the rural pastor and life in the community. Information about these schools can be secured from the director of town and country church. Scholarship aid is frequently available, when needed, from your denominational headquarters.

Courses Particularly Helpful in Preparing for the Town and Country Pastorate

• These courses actually are being offered in some seminaries either by their own faculties or in cooperation with a nearby university or state agricultural college:

1. *The Program of the Rural Church.*
2. *Organization and Administration of the Rural Church.*
3. *The Church and the Rural Community.*
4. *The Church in Rural America.*
5. *The Ethical and Political Issues of Rural America.*
6. *Rural Sociology.*
7. *The Rural Community.*
8. *Rural Social Welfare.*
9. *Agricultural Economics for the Rural Pastor.*
10. *Social Movements in Rural Life (Agricultural Organizations and Political Movements).*
11. *The People and the Land.*
12. *Rural Research Seminar.*
13. *Seminar in Rural Life and Leadership.*
14. *Rural Adult Education.*
15. *The Family.*
16. *Recreational Leadership.*

I Discover the Rural Church

• The fall issue of the Disciples *Rural Fellowship Bulletin* carries an interesting biographical sketch of Rev. H. N. Solliday of Liscomb, Iowa.

For many years, Rev. Solliday served a church of about 800 members in Webster City, Iowa. After closing his work there, he decided, because of reasons of health, to look for a small country church which would give him a couple of years to recuperate. He finally located at Bethel Grove Church, having 112 members, located twelve miles northwest of Marshalltown, Iowa.

Rev. Solliday planned to stay only a couple of years because he had been city born, but when his health was recovered, he was reluctant to leave and gives these reasons for staying: 1) I came to like the people so well, I did not care to quit them. Farmers are the most genuinely American folk. 2) I came to realize that although rural people are genuine, they also need the story of the Gospel and I am glad to give them of my talents. 3) I learned that rural churches do not lack for activities. I have used most of my ideas here and get a great thrill out of some of the rural annual occasions. 4) My experiences with the Lord's Acre project made me hesitate to leave such a good thing. I know of nothing in the life experience of a city church that will surpass such a thrill.

Of course, I would not be thoroughly honest if I failed to mention that I like having plenty of milk from my own cow, plenty of chicken from my own barnyard, plenty of garden stuff from my own garden and plenty of fresh air in my bedroom at night. I find the country a most wonderful place in which to raise kids and I now have five of them.

Drew's Pastor of the Year

Drew Theological Seminary has the worthy practice of recognizing each year an outstanding rural pastor. This year, Rev. C. Edwin Murphy, of Plainview, Nebr., was honored. Mr. Murphy had studied under Dr. Ralph A. Felton, Professor of Rural Church, and it was a privilege of high reward to come back to his alma mater and report on the successful use of the things he had learned.

Mr. Murphy is pastor of two open-country churches, Crawford Valley and Stark Valley, which are eight miles apart and nine miles from a town. The churches had been having a routine type of ministry—church school, preaching and women's society—but nothing else of significance happened. Because there was some wealth and leadership in the community, Mr. Murphy decided that the defeatist attitude must give way to one of wholesome confidence.

Sunday School at Crawford Valley had been having about 29 in attendance with a church membership of 136. To change this situation, a survey of the community was made. A map was drawn and each family located. A file was made in which the significant data concerning each family were kept and this file went every place Mr. Murphy went with his car. Now the Sunday School attendance has increased nearly 100 per cent.

Neighborhood Churches

Both of these churches lie on the edge of three communities. Therefore, it is necessary for them to function as neighborhood churches rather than community churches. Mr. Murphy decided that no narrow ministry would raise the life of these churches. Consequently, he launched upon a program of diversified approach. A parish news letter is issued monthly. This goes to all the residents in the neighborhood, not just the church members. It is not a summary of last Sunday's service but it is a commentary on the life of the community and a calendar of church events to come. The policy of this diversified type of ministry is to strengthen the life of the community at every point while not minimizing the pastor's responsibility of leading men to God.

Both churches have received rather elaborate renovations, being completely redecorated inside and out and attractively landscaped. Previous to the coming of Mr. Murphy, the churches had a very limited budget and extreme difficulty in paying conference quota was a common occurrence. Now the treasuries have a sufficient amount of money, part of which is due to the use of the Lord's Acre plan. This past year about 65 acres of corn were in these special projects. The yield varied from 20 to 40 bushels per acre.

Specialists Help

The stockmen were having difficulty with a disease they did not understand. Finding there was a lot of interest in knowing how to eliminate this disease, Mr. Murphy called in some specialists to speak to the people at a gathering at the church. Here enough interest was generated that an intelligent program of control was launched. The community now has nearly eliminated Bangs disease.

Economic advancement was not the only thing that was necessary in this community. Mrs. Murphy gathered a group of the children at the church following school and gave them lessons in singing. In the short time that she did this, she convinced the parents that their children could sing, and now there is a keen interest which they hope will lead to the hiring of a teacher of music in the public schools.

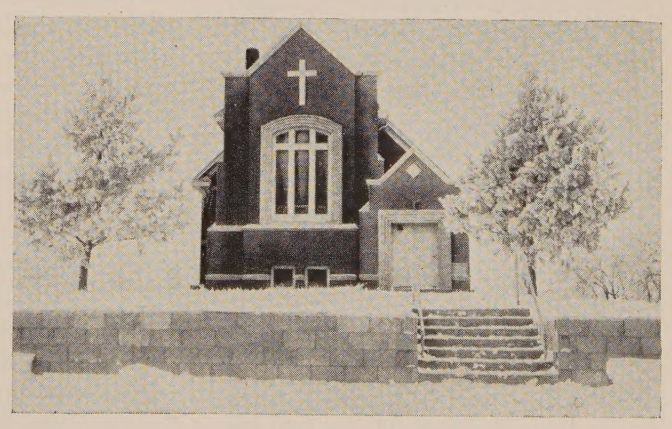
A land committee was also organized in each church. It is constituted of men well respected in the community for their knowledge and understanding of the value and productivity of the soil. Their responsibility is to help young men who are good prospects for stable community life to get a fair start on the land.

The war called most of the young men out of the community. Yet, Mr. Murphy was able to gather about the Crawford Valley church a group of about twenty young people under eighteen years of age. The momentum of this group was kept up by the enthusiasm which he had generated in the lives of two or three girls who acted as the leaders of the group.

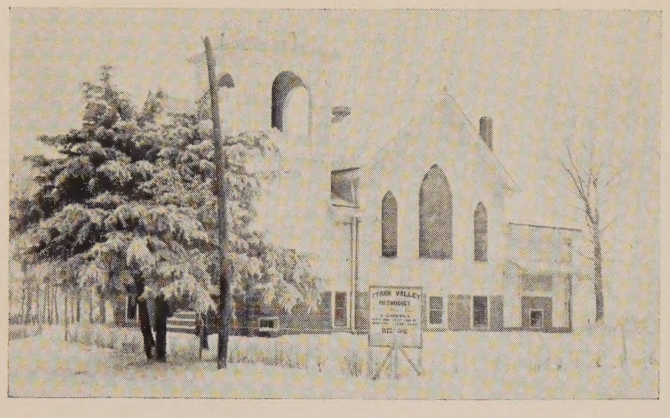
A Cantata

The Stark Valley neighborhood has been a little slower to respond than Crawford Valley. The people seem a little more conservative and yet there are signs of the quickening of new life here also. Last year, the combined choirs presented the cantata, "The Coming of Christ." When the pastor started to talk to them about presenting a cantata, they were sure it could not be done, but at his insistence, granted him the right to order the music. When it came and these inexperienced singers saw the score, they were thoroughly convinced it could never be produced. However, under the competent leadership of their pastor, they started to work. When the cantata was produced, it was the talk of the community and whenever music is mentioned, the people still talk about the presentation of that cantata. Consequently, they are preparing another one for this year.

Mr. Murphy is not afraid to get into progressive movements for the development of the community. When a Dairy Breeders Association was to be formed, he helped to promote it. He talked to farmers per-



Crawford Valley Church.



Stark Valley Church.

sonally about it and also spoke about the advantage of this type of cooperation from his pulpit. He sponsored a meeting where the farm security agent was asked to come and speak. The agent planned to cover the usual variety of subjects, but when he got on poultry, the women kept him there until it was time to adjourn. Today, better producing flocks are being developed on these farms. A number of times, the pastor has spoken from his pulpit concerning the need for stewardship of the soil. This information came to the ears of the county agent and when it was time to hold an election for the formation of a soil conservation district, the county agent knew where to find help. Needless to say, the district was formed by a vote of overwhelming confidence.

The development of capable lay leadership is not being neglected. In one church is a young man who quit school at the eighth grade. He became interested in the type of ministry his pastor was offering and began to ask questions and to take a position of leadership among the young people. His pastor provided him with reading material and today he holds a local lay preacher's license. While Mr. Murphy was being honored at Drew, this young man filled the pulpit for him. There are also another young man and a young lady who have made plans to enter full-time Christian service.

Mr. Murphy enjoys joining with the farmers in a corn husking bee, fishing and hunting trips, and even took time out to help one build a hog house. Yet as enjoyable as these are to him, he never forgets that his responsibility is to build the Kingdom of God. He has kept close touch with all the young men who have gone into the armed services. Recently, he sent them a questionnaire asking what they felt was the greatest need in their commuuity. They were unanimously agreed that what they needed most was an opportunity for creative recreation. Now at Plainview, there are efforts being made to have some wholesome recreation. It will need careful guidance but a start has been made.

While the economic level of the community has been raised, the level of the church budget has also kept pace; in fact, both churches have nearly doubled their budgets in the past three years.

Such a report makes good reading and it is a delight to denominational executives to see such developing in their area. But the most significant thing is that a seminary is recognizing progressive rural leadership. Why should not this practice become a precedent?

—D.F.P.

• Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous; and they are tied to their country and wedded to its liberty and interests by the most lasting bonds.

—Thomas Jefferson

• The First Mennonite Church of Beatrice, Nebraska, reports that in an effort to collect hogs for relief, in a special service on November 11, the offering brought in more than $1,000. Also, over 1,000 quarts of meat have been canned.

Town & Country Church

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Remit to the Home Missions Council

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The following persons with responsibility for town and country church in the religious bodies and interdenominational agencies constitute the *Board of Editors:*

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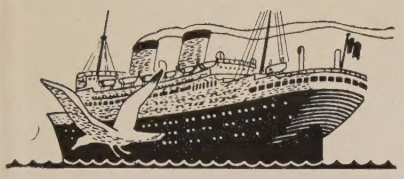


Breakfast and Conscience

' Edgar H. Grater sailed on the S. . Samuel H. Walker from New Or-eans on August 26, 1945. He helped are for 348 horses being shipped to ugoslavia. On the trip, five days vere spent in Trieste, five days in plit Jugoslavia and two weeks in Naples. He visited Pompeii, climbed Vesuvius and spent three days in Rome. Of his experience, he writes:

"It was an ordinary American breakfast, nothing unusual about it, but it suddenly took on huge proportions. The sight of a hungry ugoslav boy eagerly watching food which had been dumped in the garage can caused the enlargement. ome people would have been horri-ed, others nauseated, but I was sick vith humiliation. So many hungry nen and we were thoughtless enough o waste food. Orange juice, two ggs and bacon, plenty of bread, but-er, jam and hot biscuits—it seemed ike a banquet.

"Frankly it choked me; I didn't eel like eating. But I had ordered t and I was against waste so I had o eat. Desperately I sought for some vay of sharing—but the hundred nen working outside unloading the hip—how could I select the one who eeded it most? If I shared with one, ow could I meet the eyes of the ther ninety-nine?

"The orange juice was down, and ny fork touching the eggs when I lanced up at the open porthole opposite me. A thin face drawn into an ngratiating smile, hungry black yes between red-rimmed lids met nine. He was there only a moment, hen moved on as though the sight f food was too much to be endured ery long. A continual stream of aces appeared—young, lined, unhaven; black, brown, blonde hair -but all with the same despairing ppeal in the black eyes.

"I finished the eggs and bacon vith no relish. By this time, two iscuits and several slices of bread ad disappeared under my jacket. I felt guilty about that; after all, it was the least appetizing part of the meal I was sharing. The eggs and bacon, butter, jam, would have been more tasty. They probably had bread anyway. And I thought to share! I gave it to the first man I met and to my surprise he stuffed it into his shirt without taking one bite. I guess he had folks at home, too.

"That morning I walked for hours. Jesus fed five thousand men —and I, I couldn't even provide enough for one. I was utterly routed by the situation. I who was supposed to be a Christian, who had refused to fight, to kill others because of conscience, I was faced with a situation which seemed to have no answer. What had I done to deserve having food when so many others had not enough? The force of my responsibility weighed me down. Maybe I was after all just a 'Holy Joe' who talked a lot about Christian principles, but didn't do much at acting them out. 'Do unto others'—how would I feel if I got the bread and the other man had the eggs and bacon?

" 'Man cannot live by bread alone.' It's what goes with the bread that counts. The eggs and bacon of Christian love and kindness are so extremely necessary. Give the material things you don't need of course, but give some things you need, too; share your eggs and bacon, and your Christianity."

"The Least of These"

• "In my brief visit to Europe as a 'seagoing cowboy' I saw enough of the terrible destruction and suffering caused by the war to keep me from feeling comfortable these cold, snowy nights because I am forever seeing in my mind's eye, crowds of homeless people waiting, waiting by the roadsides, sunken-eyed children begging for something to eat, and skin-and-bone men trying to do a day's work.

"I know that the reports of mass starvation among Europeans are true. I know that, if for no other reason than to prevent revolutions among the starving people, we must feed and clothe them. I, personally, believe it is our Christian duty to sacrifice for those who have so little.

"I am grateful for the opportunities I have to tell folks of the needs and to see their response. More and more people are saying, 'How can we help?' The Sunday School Association of an adjoining county is canvassing the entire county to get carloads of wheat for Holland. A nearby community is planning a canvass to get heifers to be sent to Europe. A small church of one hundred members has already sent eight fine heifers. These are but beginnings. Such efforts must be multiplied many times and yet people will freeze and starve in Europe."

—Clarence H. Rosenberger, *Pastor, Plumcreek Church of the Brethren, Shelocta, Pa.*

Ministry to the Majority

• "With two-thirds of the population of the world rural, the world-wide mission of the Church must inevitably have a strong emphasis on rural people and the rural community. The folks to whom Jesus ministered and from whom He drew His followers and leaders were largely rural folk. The rural billion of the world's population are calling to the Church."

—Clifford L. Samuelson

• A minister in an Iowa town started out to interest people in giving a carload of oats for relief. By working through several organizations, he got a community project going and two carloads (5,000) bushels were sent from this one town. The rural people want to feed the starving people of the world. The Rural Life Association reports that the other morning an Ohio farmer phoned to say that the Ohio State Grange had endorsed their program of rural people and relief and wanted further information as to how to cooperate.

What One Church Has Done

• Rev. Carl Snucker in a recent letter reports, "Our women here in Rockford took immediate action to send blankets to Europe. We have already sent 132 and want to send more tomorrow. The number will reach 200 or more. Between $600 and $700 have been spent in buying these blankets. Thirty-five blankets were knotted or made by women.

Rural Church Center

• Under the leadership of Mark Rich, the Northern Baptists are developing an annual school for town and country ministers at the Northern Baptist Assembly Ground in Green Lake, Wisconsin. This year they are planning three conferences of four weeks each. The purpose is the in-service training of rural church leaders, both ministers and lay. Courses of study will be taught by eminent leaders in the rural church and rural life. These leaders are called in for a week of intensive study of their particular field.

The size of each conference is kept to a total of approximately fifty, including the faculty and speakers. Cost is kept at a minimum and arrangement is made whereby ministers who so desire can enter into a cooperative living arrangement and also participate in some remunerative work.

In personal conference with Dr. Rich, he stated they would be glad to receive applications from ministers or lay people of other denominations. However, scholarship arrangements which are extended to the Baptists could not be given others and it would therefore be necessary for those desiring to attend to make arrangements for scholarships through their own denominations.

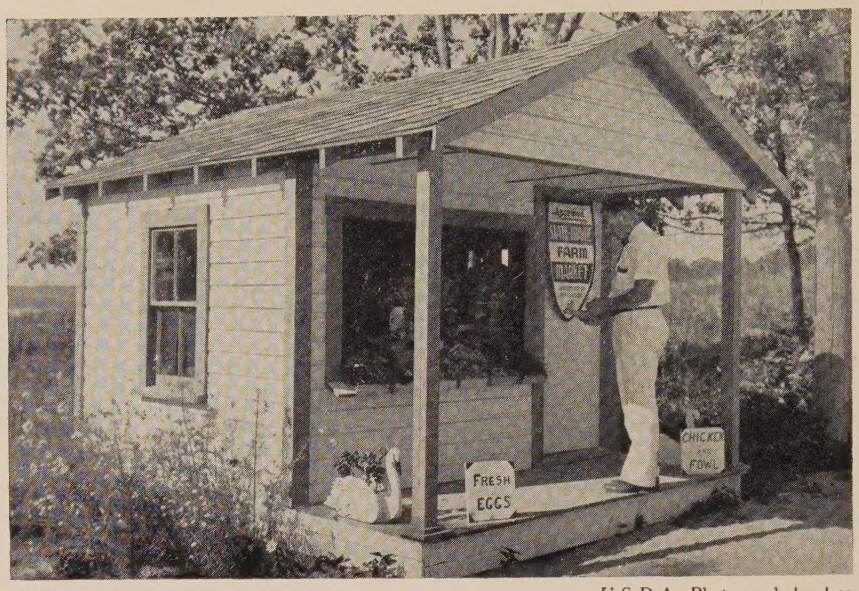
For further information write to the Rural Church Center, Northern Baptist Assembly Ground, Green Lake, Wisconsin.

Circulating Library

• Dr. John Louis Kesler, retired professor of religious education and former librarian in the School of Religion at Vanderbilt University, recently gave fifty thousand dollars as an endowment for a circulating library to that institution. The Vanderbilt Board of Trust added a fifty thousand dollar grant to this and thus established a one hundred thousand dollar library fund to be known as the John Louis Kesler Circulating Library for Rural Ministers.

A dinner in honor of Dr. Kesler was held on November 20 at Wesley Hall in Nashville.

Such devotion as this should help the rural minister to appreciate that he is not "the forgotten man."



U.S.D.A. Photograph by Lee

Farm near Wallingford, Vt.

Farmer "Hank's" Panel

• When the Town and Country Committee reported to the annual meeting of the Home Missions Council, the usual did not happen. Henry S. Randolph, our congenial chairman, posing as farmer "Hank" led a panel composed of K. A. Roadarmel, as a migrant, Harry V. Richardson, as a sharecropper, C. M. (Pat) McConnell, as a neighbor to farmer "Hank," A. L. Roberts, as the local preacher, Mrs. Candler Tatum, as a local farmer's wife and Orion Ulrey, as the county agent.

The discussion followed the pattern of a casual meeting of country folk who are honest and forthright in speech as well as deeply concerned for the welfare of their church and community.

They afforded the delegates many a laugh while presenting the significant rural life problems in bold and vivid outline.

Prejudice! Roadblock to Progress

• If you are looking for clear-cut, well-organized, pertinent material for discussion groups, order a copy of Army Talk, Orientation Fact Sheet No. 70. In eight pages of material, there are two main divisions; the facts and aids for discussion leaders. The facts are presented in answer to questions; such as, "How do we get our prejudices?" "What do we mean by a minority?" "Have all minority groups been scapegoated?" "Has our own history been free of scapegoating?" "Why is religious and racial prejudice a threat to all of us?"

Reprint copies may be ordered from International Labor Defense, 112 East 19th Street, New York 3, N. Y. Single copies 5c, 100 for $4.00.

The 1946 Convocation

• The Town and Country Committee has accepted the generous invitation of the Des Moines Ministerial Association to hold the National Convocation on the Town and Country Church in that city. The dates are November 12, 13, 14.

A program which will be of great interest is in process of preparation. An emphasis is to be made on the new situation created in rural life as a result of the war. The Iowa Survey and Religious Census is to form the background for a new approach to village life and the village church.

Rural Pastors Speak Up

• At the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina held during November, the rural pastors spoke out against "participation without representation." In their report they asked that a special committee be appointed to study the rural churches. The reason for this is that eighty per cent of the pastors in the state are rural men.

Book Reviews

A Business of My Own. September-October special issue of Community Service News. Published by Community Service, Inc., Yellow Springs, Ohio. 75c.

Anyone going through post-war adjustments, who is a bit uncertain as to where and what their future should be, will profit by this book. The first part is given to the question of a small business, its philosophy, how to get started and what may be involved in getting started. Part two deals with service occupations. So carefully is this dealt with that one comes to believe an active imagination and some determination are the fundamental essentials to a successful business in any field. Part three covers the field of small industry. One essential is to start with the raw materials which are at hand and then use the imagination to find efficient and practical uses for the products. The final part deals with cooperatives. Anyone interested in cooperatives will wish more space had been given to this possibility. However, the booklet is entirely too important to be overlooked. Every Community Council or local committee desiring to help veterans become established should become acquainted with this book.

—D.F.P.

The Story of John Frederick Oberlin

By John Augustus Beard

• This is the classic biography of John Frederick Oberlin who, when he died in 1826, after sixty years of consecrated Christian service in the Waldersbach Parish in the Vosges Mountains, was known and revered throughout Europe and is still held in honor in four continents. Yet he never published a book nor an article and never left his parish save for brief visits in nearby regions. This biography tells you what Oberlin did to receive such wide renown; why this highly educated, deeply consecrated Protestant missionary and pastor is called the Patron Saint of the Rural Church; why he was a country parish minister by deliberate choice: why, although deeply evangelical, he concerned himself with all sorts of community problems; why his Christian philosophy and the community activities initiated by him are so relevant to the rural church and the rural community today in all lands.

"If you had asked Oberlin where his religious activities ended and his secular activities began, he would probably have replied that all his activities were undertaken as religious, and that they did not differ essentially from each other in spirit or in purpose. He would doubtless have been right: but it is a very broad conception of religion that finds room for all the work he did in such varied fields as education, housing, health, the improvement of agriculture, the development of trades, the use of local natural resources, the building of roads and bridges, and the replacement of general indebtedness by general solvency."

—President Wilkens *of Oberlin College*

Permission has been secured from the Pilgrim Press to publish a twenty-five cent edition of this book originally published in 1909 and for many years out of print. The book will be about 112 pages in length, 5½" x 7¾" in size. Orders should be sent to John H. Reisner, Secretary, Christian Rural Fellowship, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y.

Man and the Soil. By Karl B. Mickey, Public Relations Department, International Harvester Company, 180 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago 1, Ill. Free upon request.

Some of the large corporations and industries have seen the handwriting on the wall and seeing have taken heed. In this booklet distributed by the Public Relations Department of the International Harvester Company is set forth a sound and readable interpretation of mankind's dependence upon the soil, and this in an attitude which religious workers will deeply appreciate. To illustrate: "Like the dust that forms our bodies, everything we work on or with, everything we buy or sell, everything we use in any way comes originally from the earth and goes ultimately back to the earth. That is nature's cycle, and man's puny devices cannot alter it. . . . . The man who would gain nature's rewards must first learn her laws and obey them implicitly."

The history of soil erosion and man's relation to it is so presented as to make it plain that the social organization and the economic system often eliminate a farmer's choice as to how he will use the acres he tills. But most appealing is the chapter on "Erosion as a Social Symptom." The author concludes, ". . . . . one of the causes of business depressions is the periodic inability of the farmer to buy back the products of industry with the proceeds from his own products . . . . . a social system based upon the exploitation of man must end up by exploiting the soil."

Methods and techniques of soil conservation are discussed in forthright non-technical terms but adequate for an understanding of the principle involved.

The suggested solution is weak and religious leaders will have to supply the moral principles by which tillers of the soil can sustain a civilization.

—D.F.P.

Bulletins on Church Finance

• Two bulletins are just off the press which are of special interest to rural pastors. The first is a study of the Lord's Acre Plan as it is being used in 150 rural churches. The other is a study of 35 church farms. They have been written by Ralph A. Felton. The Lord's Acre bulletin contains 48 pages and sells for 15 cents for single copies; 10 cents, 5 copies; 8 cents, 100 copies. The Church Farm bulletin contains 28 pages and sells for 10 cents for single copies; 8 cents, 5 copies; 5 cents, 100 copies. They may be ordered from the Home Missions Council, 297 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y., or from your denominational secretary for rural work.

+ A Sharecropper's Prayer +

ETERNAL GOD, who dost desire us each to make a crop with Thee on Thy great plantation and who art ever saying to us that Thou canst not make Thy crop alone—by Thy gracious favor and our own tireless labor help us to make a crop this year—a crop of which we need not be ashamed. Thou hast been so generous to us, so fair with us, so solicitous for us, and Thou hast shared Thy purposes so fully with us that we would not disappoint Thee. Help us not to dawdle at our work. Help us not to let Thee down. Every day Thou teachest us how great a thing it is to help Thee clothe and feed a naked, hungry world. Clothe and feed us, we beseech Thee in the nakedness and hunger of our spirits that we be no more cast down, but risen and radiant in the light of Thy presence.

By reason of Thy sun and rain and fertile soil, by reason of Thy constant presence with us, by reason of Thine utter sharing with us, we are indebted to Thee beyond our power ever to repay Thee. By Thy boundless love for us Thou forgivest us all our debts, even so we would forgive our debtors. Thou restorest us unto the sunlight of Thy favor in spite of all our failures and givest to us another chance this year to make a crop with Thee.

Thou hast even set us over a part of Thy plantation with precious families of Thine under our care. Thou hast even made us operators for Thee. And so the more we do beseech Thee that we may be so humble, so fair with all our fellows, so considerate of every least one among Thy people that we may be not unworthy of Thy confidence in us.

O God, our Father, who never yet hath failed to furnish us abundantly, help us this year not to fail Thee. Grant that this year, working with Thee in the wide fields of human need, we may make a crop, a great big crop, a clean white crop. *Amen.*

—RICHARD HENRY EDWARDS

Mississippi Rural Life Council

• The State of Mississippi which is classed as eighty per cent rural has undertaken to make the most of this situation. Under the leadership of Gov. Thomas L. Bailey, a Mississippi Rural Life Council has been functioning since June of 1944. The purpose is:

"To create a conscience and conviction concerning our responsibilities to man and to God for the conservation, the development and the use of the total resources of rural life in Mississippi;

"To develop and promote a constructive program which shall enlist all interest, agencies, organizations, institutions and individuals, in this cooperative enterprise;

"To magnify rural life and to develop a consciousness of the oneness of purpose and interest of all agencies and institutions seeking to create a better rural life in Mississippi."

One issue of a magazine, *Rural Life,* was issued. This was well received and many of the public schools and high schools are using it in their classwork. It is hoped this paper can become a regular part of the Council's program. During the past year, eight conferences on rural life were held for white leaders and five for Negro leaders. Under the leadership of the Council, a survey was made of 320 churches. The data of this survey and an annual report may be had by addressing Mississippi Rural Life Council, Jackson, Miss.

Brethren Church and Relief

• As of November 10, 1945 the Church of the Brethren had sent 767 cattle, 549 bales of clothing, 10 tons of soap, 1,000 lbs. of vegetable seeds, 4 tons of dried milk, 5,800 Christmas boxes, to war-stricken sections of Europe. It had on hand, ready for shipment 81,000 bushels of wheat, 3 carloads of canned goods, 3 carloads of flour, 2 carloads of oats, and 1 carload of rolled oats. Further, it had provided UNRRA with 317 men as attendants on livestock shipments to Europe. Total valuation placed on contributions, $458,000.

National Methodist Rural Life Conference

• A committee of the Methodist Church is hard at work preparing for a Methodist Rural Life Conference which will be held probably in July of 1947. The committee has set up eight areas of study. In each area some literature is being prepared for use as study course guides. The plan is to promote extensive use of these through 1946 and early '47 in seminars, workshops and local rural life conferences, the interest generated in these to culminate in a national rural life conference of two and one half days duration.

Extensive preparation is being made to see that an adequate interest has been generated. The Board of Education has been requested to work out a project for the Methodist Rural Youth Fellowship so that youth may bring in a statement to the national conference. The section of home missions has been asked to cooperate with the seminaries in bringing to the seminaries two men from each annual conference for a summer's quarter, to be trained for the promotion in their own conference. Also, an effort is being made to see that the interests of the national conference are adequately promoted through the literature departments, to give the rural church its due consideration.

A copy of the plans can be had by writing Rev. James W. Sells, 404 Wesley Memorial Building, Atlanta 3, Ga.

A Hopeful Sign

• The Department of Country Church and Sunday School Extension of the Presbyterian Church U. S. is back of the promotion of a far-sighted program. Realizing that about 65 per cent of the population in the area served by their churches is rural, they are looking forward to strengthening the future leadership of the rural churches. Each of their four theological seminaries has agreed to receive endowment for a chair to give specialized training to country ministers. That the program is being favorably received is shown by receipt of contributions. One open country church sent in $500.

May success come early.